

The Christian's View of the Pope

Introduction: What are we to think about all the attention that's been given to the pope this last week? What thoughts have you heard from others whether from the media or coworkers and friends?

How Would Pope John Paul II Have Wanted Us to View Him?

Consider the Catholic Catechism...

882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful."^[402] "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."^[403]

1. According to the catechism, how extensive is the authority of the pope?

883 "The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."^[404]

2. What is the relationship between the bishops and the pope?

1369 The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ. Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist (Communion), wherein he (the Pope) is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church. The bishop of the place is always responsible for the Eucharist, even when a priest presides; the bishop's name is mentioned to signify his presidency over the particular Church... Let only that Eucharist be regarded as legitimate, which is celebrated under [the presidency of] the bishop or him to whom he has entrusted it.^[189]

Through the ministry of priests the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the only Mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church in an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord himself comes.^[190]

3. What authority does this paragraph give to the pope? Why is that significant?

837 Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who - by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion - are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but 'in body' not 'in heart.'^[321]

4. According to this paragraph, what makes a person a member of the church? What qualification does the catechism mention?

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.[400] "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head." [401] This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

5. According to the catechism, what is the basis of the pope's authority and how far does it go back?

Luther's Catechism: The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church (to every Christian: see 1 Peter 2:9 & why is this passage striking?) on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

6. How does the Catholic definition of the keys differ from what you learned in confirmation class?

889 In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith." [417]

7. What does the Catholic Church teach that Christ gave to the church?

891 "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals... The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council. [418] When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed," [419] and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith." [420] This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself. [421]

8. According to Catholic belief, when is the pope infallible?

9. What does it mean that "this infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself?"

In Light of These Claims, How Would the Bible Have Us View the Pope?

For a Biblical view of the Pope, consider a portion from the Lutheran Confessions:

It is manifest that the Roman pontiffs and their adherents defend godless doctrines and godless forms of worship, and it is plain that the marks of the Antichrist coincide with those of the pope's kingdom and his followers... The doctrine of the pope conflicts in many ways with the Gospel, and the pope arrogates to himself a threefold divine authority. First, because he assumes for himself the right to change the doctrine of Christ and the worship instituted by God, and he wishes to have his own doctrine and worship observed as divine. Second, because he assumes for himself not only the power to loose and bind in this life but also the jurisdiction over souls after this life. Third, because the pope is unwilling to be judged by the church or by anybody, and he exalts his authority above the decisions of councils and the whole church. Such unwillingness to be judged by the church or by anybody is to make himself out to be God. Finally, he defends such horrible errors and such impiety with the greatest cruelty and puts to death those who dissent.

Since this is the situation, all Christians ought to beware of becoming participants in the impious doctrines, blasphemies, and unjust cruelties of the pope. They ought rather to abandon and execrate the pope and his adherents as the kingdom of the Antichrist (**Smalcald Articles: 4, 39-41**).

Scripture References	Teachings of the Antichrist	Teachings of the Papacy
<p>“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist <u>is coming</u>, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).</p>	<p>There is one great Antichrist who will come just after the time of the apostles.</p>	<p>“The Pope, Bishop of Rome and <u>Peter's successor</u>, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful” (CCChurch 882).</p>
<p>“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he <u>sets himself up in God’s temple</u>, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).</p>	<p>The Antichrist will oppose and exalt himself over God by placing himself as the sole authority among God’s people.</p>	<p>“For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as <u>Vicar [Substitute] of Christ</u>, and as <u>pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the Church</u>, a power which he <u>can always exercise unhindered</u>” (CCC 882).</p>
<p>“For the secret power of lawlessness <u>is already at work</u>; but <u>the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he (the Word through Paul) is taken out of the way</u>” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).</p>	<p>The Antichrist is more than just a person because his work was beginning in Apostolic times. His power will be held back for a time until <u>the Word of Christ is widely forsaken</u> (The Apostasy).</p>	<p>“When the Church through its supreme Magisterium [the body of bishops and Peter's successor] <u>proposes a doctrine ‘for belief as being divinely revealed,’ and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions ‘must be adhered to with the obedience of faith’</u>” (CCC 891).</p>
<p>“...<u>the lawless one will be revealed</u>, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroyed by the splendor of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).</p>	<p><u>The Antichrist will be revealed</u>. He will be <u>overthrown by the Word of Christ</u>. He finally will be destroyed by Jesus’ second coming.</p>	<p>“<u>Antichrist will overthrow the Pope and usurp his See</u>” (Catholic Encyclopedia; “Antichrist”).</p>
<p>“the coming of the lawless one will be in... <u>all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders</u>” (2 Thessalonians 2:9).</p>	<p>The Antichrist will appear to do similar things Christ did and claim what Christ alone can. Thus, It will appear that he has God’s support.</p>	<p>“...For every human creature <u>it is necessary for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff</u>” (CE; “Unam Sanctum”).</p>